R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 020 094 RE 001 260

A PRIMER FOR PROFESSORS OF READING.

BY- ALLEN, DARLENE JO

PUB DATE 26 APR 68

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.48 10P.

DESCRIPTORS- *READING INSTRUCTION, *ADULT READING PROGRAMS, CULTURAL CONTEXT, FOREIGN CULTURE, CREATIVE TEACHING, TEACHING METHODS, TEACHING MODELS, TEXTBOOK PREPARATION, SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT, CULTURAL BACKGROUND, CULTURAL DIFFERENCES,

A PROCEDURE TO TEACH NATIVE SAMOANS HOW TO TEACH READING IS DESCRIBED. THE STORY SEQUENCE IDEA WAS USED FOR SELF-TEACHING. CLASS MEMBERS COLLECTED SAMOAN LEGENDS AND RECORDED VILLAGE LIFE IN ORIGINAL BOOKS ADAPTED TO VARIOUS READING LEVELS. THIS PRODUCTION WAS DIVIDED INTO SIX STEPS--(1) ANALYZING EXISTING TEXTBOOKS, (2) WRITING THE STORIES, (3) CONTROLLING THE VOCABULARY, (4) ILLUSTRATING THE STORY, (5) PLANNING TEACHER MANUALS, AND (6) PLANNING ACTIVITY BOOKS. FINALLY, THE STUDENTS AS A GROUP PRODUCED COORDINATED SETS OF MATERIALS BASED ON INDIVIDUAL STORY SEQUENCES. NOT ONLY DID THIS PROJECT IMPROVE THE ORAL AND WRITTEN ENGLISH OF THE SAMOAN STUDENTS, BUT IT ALSO MADE THEM MORE ALERT AND KNOWLEDGEABLE OF TEXTBOOK MATERIAL. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT THE INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE (BOSTON, APRIL 24-27, 1968). (BS)

[INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION, BOSTON, APR. 24-27, 1968]

(Mrs.) Darlene Jo Allen
Assistant Professor
School of Education
University of Puget Sound
Tacoma, Washington 98416

ED 020074

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

A Primer for Professors of Reading

Symposium III In-Service Education in Reading
Teachers of Adults Who Teach Reading to Children
Friday, April 26, 1:30

RE 001 260

A unique and challenging procedure evolved out of a situation in which I found myself several years ago. On the island of Tutuila, in American Samoa I was part of a team responsible for educating pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and village supervisors. There were no guides showing how native Samoans should be taught how to teach reading. Only traditional stateside college textbooks and various reading series used in the United States elementary schools were available. On a trip to New Zealand I discovered the book Teacher, by Sylvia Ashton Warner (4), a teacher of Maori youngsters. In her book she describes organic learning as a process in which she involves her students in order to find out what is meaningful to them. This provides a key to learning and reading in particular.

> What a dangerous activity reading is, teaching is. All this plastering on of foreign stuff. Why plaster on at all when there's so much inside already? So much locked in? If only I could get it out and use it as working material. And not draw it out either. If I had a light enough touch it would just come out under its own volcanic power. And psychic power, ...is greater than any other power in the world. What an exciting and frightening business it would be: even that which squeezes through now is amazing enough. ...I picture the infant room as one widening crater, loud with the sound of erupting creativity. Every subject somehow in a creative vent. What wonderful design of movement and mood! What lovely behaviour of silksack clouds!
>
> An organic design. A growing living changing design. The normal and healthful design. Unsentimental and merciless and shockingly beautiful. (4)

The question came to my mind, why not work with <u>teachers</u> in a consistently organic way? Since I did not know how to approach Samoan teacher trainees the book, <u>Teacher</u>, stirred my own creative processes and I began working out the idea.

I. Evolution of the Story Sequence Idea

Our task in Samoa began with the recording of legends and village life. The students and I worked as fellow inquirers trying to determine ways of adapting the legends to various reading levels. Stateside reading texts were not suitable to the concepts a Samoan child understands. Several examples will serve to illustrate this point. When any Samoan woman of child-bearing age in the village is called "mother," a "mother" as pictured in a stateside textbook showing a typical American family--a mother, father, and several children with their pets does not make much sense. In Samoa all "mothers" in the village suckle any child. The concept of a mother involves an extended family situation. A second example is provided in their type of housing. Samoans do not have walls on their thatched roofed fales. A "Little White House" on Main Street, U.S.A. does not resemble the native fale. If a youngster is not happy in a particular household, he may go to another house to live as long as he wishes. These examples help to explain why children in Samoa have difficulty

reading typical American family type stories in readers.

From this setting in the South Seas came the idea of constructing self-styled reading stories, teachers manuals, and workbooks which have evolved into what are now called "story sequences." That was the beginning of this "Primer for Professors of Reading."

It is the purpose of this paper to describe the conditions which can be created for writing story sequences, to discuss their values and to delineate the procedural aspects.

Teacher education in the states is not that different from Samoa. Multi-ethnic materials suggest a need for teachers to learn how to develop materials to fit their own teaching situations. In some classrooms teachers use materials without much knowledge as to why they use them. To lift the process of reading from a sterile, in-organic process to something vital and challenging for children, students in methods classes bring educational theory into relationship with actual practice by writing and using story sequences. The process enables experienced teachers to become more knowledgable and inventive with the material they use in the classroom. It is a way of making methods meaningful and providing enriching experiences for classroom teachers.

II. Creating the Conditions for Honest Inquiry

Writing a story sequence is an excellent problem focus for inquiry with college students. J. Richard Suchman developed his theory of inquiry (3) as a process for teachers to use with youngsters showing how meaning could be obtained from a problem focus, or discrepant event by asking questions that provide data on which theories are built. Unfortunately, problem focuses sometimes slip into "gimmicky" areas that do not make much difference, but when a problem is provided such as creating a story sequence, the focus assumes valuable humanistic dimensions. Students begin to inquire of the professor, peruse teachers manuals and

read teacher education texts with extreme interest since they have a genuinely urgent purpose for inquiring.

One of the major objectives is to enable students to formulate their own theories and to test them in relationship to how a child learns to read. The professor's role can be furthered by assuming teacher tactical moves as described in Strasser's, Components in a Teaching Strategy, Tactical Moves in Inquiry, Unit I. (2). In this way the professor uses general, responsive and initiatory moves in order to help students determine their rationale for action. Strasser describes how the teacher tactical moves help to further inquiry and develop higher level thinking strategies for students. During class the professor strives to attain cooperation of a group of scholars, rather than a strong sense of competition. A human relationships laboratory develops where learning spontaneously occurs because of the interraction between group members. Actually, the professor must be honest in realizing he does not know ultimate answers, but that knowledge is an ever changing thing and that in this situation he, too, is a learner. Of prime concern is that the professor be an inquirer along with the students as well as a facilitator of inquiry.

III. Procedural Steps in Constructing Story Sequences

When we first began the construction of story sequences at the University of Puget Sound, it was with great timidity. The idea was tested by a suggestion that it would be a possible project for students in the pre-service reading methods course. The first story sequence was published. This student was soon asked to share it with local PTA groups and local educational associations. It was particularly exciting because this person's grammar needed improvement in both his oral and written English. Obviously, the benefits he derived from this experience were numerous and both his speaking as well as writing ability improved considerably.

At the beginning stage of story sequence experimentation students were permitted to adapt their favorite stories to the vocabulary of a series of readers as long as they identified the source of the story and which manual they used as a model. Using the format for the manual students constructed stories following the same sentence structure, length of story, and picture style consistent with the manual. In addition to this students made workbooks to correlate with their stories. After several class discussions and individual conferences it became apparent that the entire assignment would work out better if it was divided into logical segments spaced over a period of time so that students could tackle each phase appropriately.

Although the steps in constructing a story sequence appear to be quite simple it is an organic process. The steps are as follows:

1. Textbook material analysis
2. Writing the story
3. Controlling the vocabulary
4. Illustrating the story
5. Planning teachers manuals
6. Planning activity books

1. Textbook material analysis

Several weeks are devoted to study and comparison of leading textbook materials. Textbook company representatives come to demonstrate the use of their materials. During this time students meet in grade level seminars to note differences between strongly phonic oriented series, traditional (synthetic method) type series, and linguistic type series. Students compare skills presented at each level by the different textbook materials and curriculum guides.

2. Writing the story

At this point it is helpful to introduce some creative writing lessons. Sharing imaginative materials is useful. Torrance and Meyers have fas-

cinating booklets for all age levels that stimulate the imagination. One for primary entitled Can You Imagine? (1), develops creative thinking abilities by having the reader imagine what the world would be like if peas tasted like candy, or if all the shoes in the world were the same size. There is also a booklet for the intermediate grades. Both are geared to the creative expression of youngsters at these levels, thus helping the college student relate to children at each age. Journal articles may be referred to for their surveys of children's interests at different ages. Since the college students each tutor a child, the most valuable source of information is the tutee. It is important that students write their stories first without vocabulary limitations so that their creative ideas flow freely.

3. Controlling the vocabulary

Students study teachers guides as models for their manuals and use the cumulative vocabulary lists found in the guides for revising their stories. Students construct readability formulas and formulate theories about vocabulary control. They begin to note pros and cons for introducing vocabulary and it is interesting to see them discover vocabulary differences between series. To note consistent sound-symbol relationships and to probe for reasons why words are introduced in different readers at different levels is necessary.

4. Illustrating the story

Often students ask questions such as, should the pictures tell the story? Should illustrations be just for color as they are in some beginning books for a linguistic series? During this phase of the assignment students analyze types of illustrations and their impact. Artistic students will spend a lot of time on this aspect of the story sequence

even to the point of helping their "less artistic" peers illustrate their stories. Consideration is given to factors such as the media to be used--watercolor, pen and ink sketches, photographs, tissue paper mosaics and special techniques--pop-up pictures exposing a bug in a flower, or particular types of paper--cloth-paper that won't tear, acetate or laminated covering, or what to use for the print--primary typewriter or hand printing.

5. Planning teachers manuals

Students are shown the one page McGuffey reader manual and they outline contrasting ways of constructing teachers guides. Frankly, there are not many commercial teaching manuals that make exciting reading. There is one that a student did that was colorful and nice. She wrote it for a story about a teflon frying pan. In it she circled difficult words and noted in the context of the story that the teacher might ask certain comprehension questions. All too often teachers manuals describe "common sense" pedagogy, but self-made teachers manuals are intriguing.

6. Planning activity books

After students have written and illustrated their stories, controlled vocabularies, and written teachers manuals, they are ready to plan activity books. This includes the preparation of games, aids, crossword puzzles and skill development activities for their stories. Children find these activities fun and meaningful. Now the unit is ready for use with youngsters.

IV. Emerging Story Sequence Forms

1. Writing coordinated sets of materials

Students are now writing coordinated sets of materials. New benefits are derived from having an entire group work out criteria for each

procedural step. Reading levels are assessed more accurately. If a story is written for a first grade level, but is much too difficult suggestions are made by the peer group for either altering the reading level or altering the story and sometimes both. Story content must somehow fit together and the manual must have consistent form. For unique words a miniature glossary may be formulated so that these words are not necessarily part of the cumulative word list. The Dolch Basic Sight Vocabulary may also be included. Interestingly enough, the attempt to coordinate stories often leads students into a "Dick and Jane" format which they desperately try to avoid. Publicity on the unreal world of Dick and Jane in a never-never land of white smiling families has caused the students to avoid this situation. Animal stories and multi-ethnic cultural stories are more pleasing to the students. One group who coordinated their stories into a series realized that they had only written stories about things which interested <u>them</u> and decided to write an evaluation of the project so that future classes would not fall into writing about white middle-class backgrounds only. They suggested planning a series for a multi-racial school so that the stories would fit the locale.

2. <u>Transcribing Indian Legends</u>

Children of the Nisqually Indian Reservation near Yelm, Washington have been tutored by University students in the reading methods course for a year now. By having students tutor the Indians on a one-to-one ratio, Indian children are able to do better in school. The tutors have administered several tests developed by Miles Zintz (5) which are meant to discover the amount of understanding Indians of the southwest have of English idiomatic expressions. Answers to two multiple choice tests

are interpreted by the college students and related to the basal texts Indians used in the classroom. College students help by making personal dictionaries of the idiomatic expressions related to school texts, thus enabling Indian children to read more functionally at school. In the future, it is hoped that the dictionary idea can be incorporated into the story sequence. Then idiomatic expressions will be introduced in stories we develop about Indian life.

At the present time, students in my cultural anthropology and education course are carrying out an idea requested by Indian leaders who have wanted their Indian legends recorded before the elders die. It is difficult to get elders of the reservation in the right mood to tell these legends to students. Since the days of mission schools when white ways were taught to be better than Indian ways, it has been difficult for elders to even want to share their stories. Periods of silence pass when these gentlemen recollect their rhythmical nature stories. Sometimes students sit until late at night, staring into oil lamps and listening to tales of owls and cougars, of lakes and mountains, about bear and ants trying to decide the length of night and day. Each story is transcribed for several reading levels for children to enjoy. Students in this class composed of teachers, administrators and students, who have already completed student teaching have found this experience challenging.

V. Summary of Values

The meaning a student derives from writing a story sequence tends to be diversified, often a stimulus to creative teaching. It comes from the organic nature of the project and cooperatively working it out as a team with other students. In writing story sequences they tend to be more alert and knowledgable

of textbook material than those who do not have this exposure. They become more tolerant, critical, and yet more open to creative ways of using materials. Capabilities unfold during the writing process which students never realized before.

During the past several years numerous students have given testimony to the fact that the story sequence assignment has been a valuable learning experience for them. Just as Marshall McLuhan offers the "probe" rather than the "package," students teach themselves by the story sequence process. By probing for "a way" rather than being given a package which represents "the way," teachers can more easily effect change, innovation, and creativity in the teaching of reading. What an exciting thing teaching can be, learning can be--that is what this "Primer for Professors" is meant to convey.

Meyers, R.E., and Torrance, Paul. Can You Imagine?, Boston: Ginn and Company, 1963.

Strasser, Ben. Components in a Teaching Strategy, Tactical Moves in Inquiry, Unit I, San Anselmo, California: Search Models Unlimited, 1967.

Suchman, J. Richard. Developing Inquiry, Chicago: Science Research Associates Incorporated, 1966.

Warner, Sylvia Ashton. Teacher, London: Secker and Warburg, 1963, p. 14.

Zintz, Miles V. A Reading Test and Multiple Meanings Form I, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico